

Successes, when the Signs of Divine
FAVOUR:

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SERMON

Preached upon the Occasion of the

GENERAL THANKSGIVING

Sept. 7. 1704.

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By *Nath. Hough*, M. A. Chaplain to
the Right Honourable the Countess *Faucon-*
berg, Lecturer of *Kensington*, and Fellow of
Jesus-College, Cambridge.

Published at the Request of several Gentlemen.

LONDON,

Printed for *Alexander Bosvile* at the Dial and
Bible over against *St. Dunstan's Church* in
Fleetstreet. MDCCIV.

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TO THE

Right Honourable and truly Pious

L A D Y.

THE

Countess Dowager

F A U C O N B E R G

This Discourse,

In Obedience to her Ladyship's Com-
mands : And as a mean Acknow-
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Her Honour's most Dutiful

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Psal. CXLIV. v. 15.

*Happy are the People that are in
such a Case ; yea, happy are the
People, whose God is the Lord.*

THE Character of *Lord* (tho' promiscuously us'd in the Holy Writings) yet We Christians are particularly taught to apply it to God the Son, to whom the Father has committed all Government. We cannot doubt, but *David*, whose Son *Jesus Christ* is so often called, did evidently by the Spirit of Prophecy, foresee the *Lordship* and *Dominion* of This his Son. 'Tis plain he did, from many Passages in his Psalms, which cannot possibly be suited to *Solomon*, or to any other of his Posterity, but only to the *Messias* of his Line and Family.

As in Psalm the 72d. when he says, *Give the King thy Judgments, O God : and thy Righteousness unto the King's Son ;* 'Tis manifest, this

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King's

King's Son could be no other than Jesus Christ; because the whole Course of the following Psalm is carried too high to fall upon any mortal Prince, or upon any other Person besides, that ever came out of the Loins of David.

And to set this thing beyond all suspicion, in the 110th Psalm he expressly calls Christ Jesus by the Name of Lord; *The Lord said unto my Lord*, i. e. God the Father thus addresses his only Son, *Sit thou on my Right Hand, till I make thine Enemies thy Footstool.* We have our Blessed Saviour himself in the New Testament, commenting upon this place, and confirming to us by his own Exposition, that David knew him by the Title of Lord.

If so, I would humbly ask, why in this Text, without any Strain at all, the Character of Lord may not be fixed upon our Blessed Saviour? why, when the Psalmist says, *Happy are the People whose God is the Lord*, he may not have some respect to Christian Kingdoms and States to come, such as should hereafter own, and be under the Authority of Jesus Christ, which he so certainly foresaw, and has so plainly described?

What

What makes this Interpretation still more likely, is, that in the former Verses we have the Character of a Kingdom flourishing, as to Temporals only. We are told of a Nations being populous, *V. 12.* and abounding with Sons and Daughters; of a Nations being plenteous, *V. 13.* and full of all manner of Store; of a Nations being prosperous, *V. 14.* and having no Calamities in the midst of them, nor any *Complaints in their Streets*: And then he adds at the Close, *Happy are the People that are in such a case.* 'Tis well with them that it is thus; and they have great Cause to be thankful. But this is not all: *Yea, happy are the People whose God is the Lord*, i.e. Happy are they, who in accession to all these Temporal Felicities, enjoy the farther Advantage of being under a Divine Dominion, under the *Lordship* and Government of Jesus Christ. Had the Psalmist meant no more than the common Providence of God, that seems sufficiently explain'd in the Populoufness, the Plenty, and the Prosperity of the Nation which he had been describing: But here seems a *Rising higher* in this earnest Repetition, *Happy are the People, &c. yea, happy are the People whose God is the Lord.*

Whether this Interpretation may exactly hold or no, yet the Application, we are sure, directly centers in this Nation, this Church of *England*. *We, We* are the happy People drawn in this Psalm to the very Life, and upon whom this Description comes down more fully and forcibly, than upon any Community of Mankind ! With regard both to Heavenly and worldly Blessings, both to the Plenty and Prosperity of a Land, as 'tis here represented ; and likewise to the Dominion of our *Lord*, as 'tis here foretold : In both these respects our Case is such, as our Neighbours do admire, our Enemies may envy, and we can never sufficiently acknowledge.

Did the Design of this Day lead me to consider the State of Christianity, or *Divine Dominion*, I might say that our *Lord* is no where more purely worshipp'd, more justly honour'd, nor, I trust, more practically obey'd, then in this Church of his, and Country of ours : *His* Church is here primitively establish'd, according to his own Model, and that of his Apostles. *His* Gospel is here honestly publish'd, just as the Holy Penmen have left it ; free from any foul Corruptions on the one hand ; without any Suppression or unjust Con-

Concealments on the other: *His* Ordinances and Sacraments are here simply and gravely administered, without a Multitude of New Inventions to alter, and make 'em quite other things then what they were; And they are administered too by an Order of Men, not started into Office without Call, but who derive their Commission in a regular and successive manner from the first *Bishops* and Governors of the Church: *His* Laws too are here publicly and reputably owned, wrought into the very Body of our common *Laws*, back'd and seconded by our Civil Constitution, and so mix'd and incorporated with *That*, that *Church* and *State*, the Cross and the Scepter seem to be made one, and must stand or fall together. Beside the special Assistances of Heaven, Law, Custom, Reputation, Authority are on the side of the true Christian Religion: So that nothing can be wanting (bating the restor'd Discipline of the Church) but our own Hearts and Wills to make us the happy Subjects of Christ the *Lord*.

To descend to temporal Felicities (towards which the Context and this glad *Occasion* both invite us): Here our little *Island* seems one large Scene of Blessing. We are not so much distinguish'd from
other

other Nations by a Sea of Waters, as we are by a Flood of Mercies and Favours which surround us on all sides.

Were we to draw our Prospect only within this present Summer, what a number of good things have come rowling in upon us, exceeding (as the Prayers of this Morning express it) not only our Merits, but our very Hopes and Expectations? How kind has God been to us this Year in filling our Land with Plenty, in giving us such a fair and fruitful Harvest, which few Years can equal, but enough to supply many, in blowing home the Riches of the World into our Harbours, in securing our Commerce, in succeeding our Counsellors, in blessing our Arms? Arms! Under this Article, not *Memory*, not *History* can furnish us with a parallel *Instance* to the last Months success: Not *We*, not our *Ancestors* through several Ages have such an *Action* to shew for our Nations Honour; for ours did I say? No; for the Honour of our GOD. Most *Occasions* of Joy come so moderate, that Nature can bear them; *Expectation* has, in some measure, seiz'd upon them before they do come, and when they are actually arriv'd, *Sense* can hold out to enjoy

joy the rest : But really the *Blessing* this Day celebrated astonishes whilst it pleases, and Time was wanting to wear off the *Wonder*, e're we could come to taste the Satisfaction. Most *Subjects* of *Victory* and *Success* have serv'd to fire the Fancies of ingenious Men, and to set their Wits and Pens a-going ; But, as this is an *improper* return for this Place, so I fear not to say, that 'tis an *unequal* one, and that no Expressions can reach the Atchievements of this Time, nor any *Pencil* describe them after *His*, Who Personally gain'd the greatest Glory in them.

We have heard of a whole Army's marching with as much Haste, as single Persons can make a Journey ; we have heard of its Conquering and Subduing with the same haste almost that it march'd : We have liv'd to see an *Empire* rescu'd with more Honour than ever it was rais'd, and greater Difficulties undergone and overcome too out of a generous Design, than *Ambition* or *Interest* itself did ever wade through. We have been told of Danger being pursued afar off, in order to be diverted nigher Home, and (what may seem strange) the very *Distance* of our Forces, has, by God's Blessing, prov'd our *Security*. 'Tis to be hop'd
we

we may, in a little time, see something stranger, and that is *Bigotry* itself subdu'd by the *Succours* which have been sent it, Superstition softn'd by such kind Assistance, and the mistaken *Catholick Religion* at length yielding to such a truly *Catholick Spirit*.

Far be boasting from Us, save in the Name of our God! But how has He in a Critical Minute, stemm'd the Torrent of universal Tyranny, reduced those into a sudden *Captivity*, who studied nothing more than the *enslaving* of their their Neighbours, and made one little Spot and Corner of *Europe* the *Honourable Means* of saving the *Whole*?

Wise and wonderful is He in all his works below, and great in all his doings. In none greater then in sinking Pride and Vanity when swollen to their utmost pitch; then in suppressing those seditious and insolent Spirits, who not content with lawful Possessions, put the World into a bustle, and pursue unreasonable Demands; lastly, then in raising up Persons of lower Note and Significance, to be at last the glorious Instruments of pulling down the mightiest Oppressors, and

so of making their Shame and Confusion double.

All these agreeable Remarks the Solemnity of this Day offers to us; and can we in addition to the Peace and Quiet, the Plenty and Opulence, the Liberty and Freedom, the pure Faith and Religion which we enjoy at Home, reflect upon our great Honour and Success Abroad, and not be drown'd, as it were, at once in Admiration, Gratitude and Joy?

If it is possible for so much Joy to break out any way (for greatest Joys have always the smallest Vent) must it not break out in Strains of high Devotion, and in Hymns of Holy Praise? Must not We say it of Our selves, and must not Strangers and Foreigners say it of Us too, *Happy are the People, &c. yea, happy, &c.*

But, after all this Exultation, I must beg leave to make a Pause. Successes are very agreeable Things, and what We are apt to swallow down with a great deal of Pleasure: But the main Question is, Whether they certainly prove any People to be the Favourites of God?

If so, then that long *Run of Prosperity* which our *dangerous Neighbour* has enjoy'd, would argue very *uncomfortably* against us, and be more *discouraging* to us in its *Cause*, than it has been in its *Effects* *deplorable*.

How then shall we found our *Thanksgiving* upon a safe *Bottom*? How to our *Triumphs*, shall we find a good *Title*? VVe must attend to those *Conditions* which engage the *Love* and *Favour* of *God*, as well as to the *Conquests* which declare his *Power*: And, till this be done, notwithstanding all our *Trophies* and our *Standards*, we want a certain *Sign*, whether *We* are the *People* whose *God is the Lord*.

To clear up this *Difficulty*, and withal to make the *Duty* of this *Day* truly comfortable; I propose to lay down these few *Rules*, when *Successes* are the *Signs of Divine Favour*.

I. VVhen they are the *Consequences* of a *Just*, *Necessary* and *Lawful VVar*, undertaken not out of *Ambition*, or *Avarice*, or any such wicked *Ends*,
but

(II)

but for the pure *Support* of our *Sacred Religion*, and of our *Civil Rights*, not otherwise to be preserved without a *Miracle*.

II. VWhen they are used, not as the *Occasions* of more *Security*, *Sin* and *Luxury*, but as the *Encouragements* of *Universal Amendment* and *Reformation*.

III. VWhen they are made, not the *Incentives* of *Envy*, *Faction* and *Discontent*; but the *Grounds* of better *Union* and *Agreement* amongst our selves.

IV. and *Lastly*, VWhen they become the *Motives* not of a *Formal*, or a *Pompous Thanksgiving* only, but a sincere *Love*, and hearty *Praise* to God Almighty.

I. *Successes* are the *Signs* of *Divine Favour*, when they are the *Consequences* of a just, necessary and lawful *War*, undertaken, &c.

We know very well that *evil* and *ambitious* Princes are often made the *Rods* of the Divine Wrath, the *Whips* and *Scourges* of Mankind; and These they cannot be, unless they gain *Conquest* and *Success* which enables them to put those Countries under their *Troke*, which GOD before-hand has resolved to *punish*. In such Cases we must not look upon these growing Potentates as Creatures of *Favour*, but as Tools of *Vengeance*. And we have no more Cause to think that GOD is pleased with their *Successes*, than with *Storms* or *Tempests*: For those too (as we have been taught by sad Experience) found *Great*, and seem *Terrible*; and yet, like the other, leave nothing but *Ruine* and *Desolation* behind them.

Whenas, if a People (as 'tis manifestly our Case) have no *Desire* or *Occasion* to extend their *Dominions*: When we are content to sit quietly under our own *Laws*, and to enjoy the Fruit of our own *Labours*, and think of nothing more than to have our *Religion* and *Government* continued to *Us* and our *Posterity*, as being sensible that Both are the very best in their kinds; I say, if out of no other Intent than the maintaining of these

these undoubted *Rights*, we are oblig'd to have recourse to *Arms*, and by these *Arms* are enabl'd to attain such *just* and *lawful* Ends, how can we but conclude that our *Successes* are Evidences that *G O D* is our *L O R D*?

Especially when we consider further, that the *Enemy*, whom We thus oppose, disowns the *Authority* of a *Sovereign*, whom we *Love* and *Honour*, and, by all imaginable *Obligations*, are bound to *Obe*y; when he has made an open *Attempt* upon us, tho' not by an actual *Invasion* as often design'd, yet by an arbitrary *Imposition* of a *Deputy* Prince of his own, as if we were already his *Slaves*; when besides he has broke the most *solemn* Leagues to which we trusted, has shewn as little *Truth* to us as *Tenderness* to his own *Subjects*, has made it all along his *Practice* to enlarge his *Power* beyond *Right*, and to use it without *Mercy*: To get Ground against such a General *Oppressor*, to put a check to so much growing *Violence*, to give some *Relief* to our over powr'd *Allies*, and some *Rest* to an uneasy World; sure this is an Argument that our *Successes* are Good, and come from the *Giver* of all *Victory*?

'Tis

'Tis plain we take not up the *Sword* 'till *Treaties* were found to be useleſs, and *Oaths* inſignificant, 'till a foreign Kingdom was ſeiz'd upon contrary to frequent *Renunciations*, and made an addition to a *Power* already *Exorbitant*; nay, not 'till our own *Conſtitution* was ſtruck at by a pretended *Title*, and that *Title* back'd by a *Force* which is really too great, and not barely pretended.

We ſtrive only, as all Men in their *Wits* ſhould, againſt Civil *Bondage*, or, as all Chriſtians ſhould, againſt *Superſtitious Bigotry*, which makes *Cruelty* *Conversion*, and *Killing* good Service: And if *We* amongſt other Nations confederate in this *Glorious* *Deſign*, are chiefly ſerviceable to bring it about; if *G O D* gives us *Courage* and *Conduct* for this great *Purpoſe*, and makes our Enterprizes as *prosperous* as they are *juſtifiable*, why then there is no room left to ſuſpect the *Love*, and *Care*, and *Patronage* of *Heaven*.

As it wou'd fare the worſt with us of all People if we fell a *Prey* into the *Hands* of our *Enemies*; ſo when it goes the beſt, and we do the
moſt

most to defeat their *unjust* Attempts, then may it be said with some *Ground*, that we are that People whose *G O D* is the *L O R D*.

2dly. The second sign of Successes shewing the Favour of God, is, when they are used not as the occasions of more *Security*, Sin and *Luxury*, but as *Means*, and *Encouragements*, of *Amendment* and *Reformation*.

Supposing a Nation was tolerably *Good*, yet if Prosperity tends generally to *corrupt* it, we shall either see it decline gradually, or else it will fall more suddenly and fatally at last. For it cannot be that *God* should ever Bless a People universally *Vicious*, or give them *success* for their *own* sakes, but rather out of some *judicial* Ends upon other Kingdoms which are as *bad*, if not *worse* than they.

'Tis commonly laid down as a certain Maxim, that National *Blessings* or *Punishments*, are confin'd wholly to the present World: But not to insist too boldly upon this, we may be sure that if a Nation be bad and grows constantly worse, it must from *Natural* as well as *providential* Reasons, tend

tend towards *Ruine*, and can never expect any long *Felicity*, or lasting *Success*.

And though *We* of this Kingdom (I trust) are not more *loose* and *dissolute*, but rather less so than any of our Neighbours; yet next to the *First* Surprise of our late *Great* Victory, all sober Persons, I believe, make this the 2^d. namely, that considering how *sinful* we are, we should have been so *successful*. I say not *This* with any Design to pall the *Pleasure* of the present Day; but out of an earnest Desire that such *joyful* Occasions may return often: Because great *Victories* and great *Vices* cannot be long Companions; nor can general Ill-living admit of frequent Occasions of *Thanksgiving*.

To speak the Truth, what *Dissoluteness* soever there may be in *Camps* and *Armies*, as there is usually too much; yet that it goes well with any *Christian* Kingdom in the whole, must certainly be owing to the *Favour* of God, and that *Favour* in some measure due to the *Lives* and *Prayers* of its Good Inhabitants: Thousands of which sort, I verily believe, are to be found in the Body of this Nation, and in the Bosom of this Church.

Church. It fares better with the *Publick* for the sake of these *Righteous*, tho' perhaps many of them are *Private* Persons; not all *Private* neither, since we see in our *Gracious Sovereign* [and are happy in the *Experience* as well as *Sight*] a strict *Vertue*, an exemplary *Devotion*, a *Parental Care* over her People, a Noble *Compassion* for the Afflicted, a generous *Contribution* to the Distressed, and a Zealous *Concern* to have Piety and good Order promoted every where, amongst her *Subjects*, as well as *Domesticks*.

And let me add another thing, which (*Respect* to our *sacred Function* can never suffer us to forget) and that is, her Princely *Munificence* to the poor and needy *Ministers* of *Jesus Christ*, owned already by them in much better *Sentences* than I can use; and in better *Successes* than We could ever expect, is, I trust, already own'd by our *Lord* himself. The *Congratulation* of both these has come so close together, that the *Victory* looks like an *Attendant* upon the *Charity*. And if the *true Religion*, which her Majesty thus protects and practises, descends but from the *Throne* downwards, then will our *Successes* both make and prove Us the *People whose*, &c.

III. Another Sign when Successes speak the *Favour* of GOD, is, when they are made not the *Incentives* of Envy, Faction and Discontent; but the *Grounds* of better Union and Agreement amongst our selves.

Indeed, if we pull down with one Hand what we build with another: If our *Animosities* increase with our *Conquests*, and whilst our *Honour* shines abroad, our *Contentions* burn at home; then one knows not what to think of the *Love* and *Favour* of GOD. This looks as if God meant us *Good* things, but we mean our selves *Evil* ones; whereby we appear a *disingenuous*, as well as a *foolish*, an *unworthy*, as well as an *impolitick* People.

What, will not *Prosperity* it self please Us? and shall our *Jealousies* rise whilst our *Enemies* seem falling? Shall so many of our dear Country-men lose their *Lives* abroad for our *Comfort* and *Defence*, and must we keep up our *Home-Quarrels*, at once to endanger Us, and make our *Lives* uncomfortable too? Has so much *Blood* been let out of *English Veins*; and are there any *Ill Humours* still remaining? Could we have seen the *Fatal Field* of
 -A. III. Battel,

Battel, and heard those *dying Shrieks* and *departing Groans*. Sure such a Scene would teach us to fly *Contention* as the *Daughter* of *Hell* and *Mother* of *Death*. Let those who love *Intestine Divisions*, survey the *Miseries* which *Germany* has felt ; and see the *Danube* floating with *dead Bodies*, and *flowing* down with *discoloured Streams* ; and then try if they have a *Heart* to hold out such *pernicious Work* ? What, cannot we sit still, and be easie, when nothing shakes us but mutual *Malice* and implacable *Revenge* ? Good God ! that in the midst of *Successes* We should still harbour *unthankful Suspicions* ; that in answer for *loud Mercies*, we should return *silent Murmurings* ; that when nothing is wanting to make us *Happy*, but to acquiesce in the *Happiness* we have, we should contrive to be *impatient* in order to be *miserable* !

Whenas, as we are of late sensibly convinc'd, that a *divided Empire* soon comes to *Destruction* ; so the Case is the same as to a *divided Island*. And tho' God has made us *Instrumental* in preserving the *One*, when upon the *Edge of Ruine* ; yet if the *Other* sinks into the *same Calamity*, to whom shall We fly for *Preservation* ?

Were we but as *Unanimous* as Religion and Policy advise, and as *Ingenuity* and *Gratitude* under such great *Blessings* should engage Us ; then might we pronounce our selves *The People whose, &c.*

IV. Which brings to my 4th and last Head, viz. That *Successes* are *Signs* of *Divine Favour*, when they become not the *Motives* of a *Formal* or a *Pompous Thanksgiving* only ; but of sincere *Love* and hearty *Praise* to God Almighty.

We drop the true Design of this Day, and turn our *Praises* into *Provocations*; if we regard the *Splendid* or *Pompous Part*, more than the *sincere* or the *Pious One*. *Mock-Thanksgivings* are real *Affronts* ; and to return feigned *Acknowledgments*, may in a little time make way for *Complaints*, which we cannot feign.

We have heard at the Beginning of this War, of *solemn Thanks* return'd by *differing Parties* for the very same *Action*, design'd, one would think, to gratifie *Ostentation* at the Expence of Heaven, and to deride God in the first place, in order to discourage their Enemies in the second : A ridiculous as well as impious piece of Policy !

We

WE (Thanks to God) need none of these little Arts to set off the *Great Advantages* which he has given us. Our Advantages are too *Considerable* for our Enemies *secretly* to conceal by Subtile Artifices, or for us publickly to express in *suitable Acknowledgments*.

The Ministers of all the Courts in *Europe* almost do at once bear witness to the Justice of the *Common Cause*, as well as to the Importance of our *Victory*; and whilst their united Efforts concur with their Addresses, we cannot despair of humbling an *Ambition* which thus disturbs the *Western World*.

If we expect then that our *late Successes* should be seconded by *Others*, we must not for *Substantial Blessings* return *empty Demonstrations* of Respect, nor let the *Duty* of the Day run out in *Show* and *Flourish*, without feeling our Hearts *devoutly* moved, and *piously* affected.

We must not grow *Giddy*, and *Foolish*, and give our selves up to a *Vain* Insulting and Ridiculing of our Enemies; but be *modest* whilst we are *thankful*, and avoid *Self-confidence* whilst we indulge *Rejoycing*.

Much less must we let any *riotous Doings*, or any extravagant *Revellings* close up the present *Service*: But as in the House of God we have been

now

now devoutly assembled, so let us in our own be decently and cheerfully Hospitable.

Then will our Successes not only as received but as remembred, be further Proofs that We are the People whose God is the Lord.

To sum up the Whole :

Lord ! what a happy, undeservedly happy People are We ! seemingly separate from all other Nations, to be as it were the singular Charge of the Almighty ! Plac'd under an ancient and agreeable Government, set at equal distance from Arbitrary Sway, and from Popular Confusion ; professing a pure and holy Religion, alike remov'd from Popish Errors and from Modern Enthusiasms.

Quiet, easie, opulent at Home ; Honoured, useful, considerable Abroad : Respected by our Allies, and by our Adversaries not despis'd : Famous for the Exploits of War, and free from the Miseries of it ; Full of the Blessings of Peace, and not yet ruin'd by the Abuse of Them.

Preserving our own Liberties, and securing those of all Europe ; Succouring an Empire, and yet not aiming at any ; Defending the Reformation here, and supporting it every where.

We

WE have had dangerous *Enemies* ever since the *Reformation*; *Spain* first, *France* afterwards, *Rome* always: But their successive *Attempts* have been only so many several *Occasions* for GOD more signally to appear for Us, and for Us more *sincerely* to praise our God: Our *Histories* are so many continu'd *Chronicles* of remarkable Deliverances, and singular *Providences* are wrought almost into every *Page*.

But what need of looking into past *Annals*, when this *present Year* is enough to take up our thankful *Thoughts*?

We have prevail'd over two *United Powers*, which it has been our former Endeavour to vanquish singly and alone. Our *Fleets* have rid upon the Sea without *Resistance*, and our *Armies* have overcome it where it was. Places of *Defence* have been quitted with greater *Haste* than ever they were took; and *Imperial Cities* have recover'd their Liberty at less *Expence* than ever they gain'd it. That *Ambition* which no *Terms* cou'd bind, has met with *Bounds* of another nature, and whilst it meditated unjust *Advances*, has made an ignominious *Retreat*. Self-*Defence* has fetch'd those *Forces* back, which lately made *Cruel* *Invasions* upon their quiet *Neighbours*; And the *same Month* has
seen

Those return in straggling Parties who went out
numerous and confident. 'Tis certain Protection
has been ask'd, where nothing less than Submission
was expected; and whilst nothing would serve
but Conquest down the Danube, Security is sought
behind the Rhine.

If this Turn of Things promises well for the
Publick, ought we not to thank GOD the great
Author? and to thank him the more for making
Us his chief Agents in this successful Turn? Unto
Him let cheer'd Europe, and the Reviv'd Reforma-
tion return their mutual Praise.

May We in particular under this great Honour
and Favour both, act worthy of the Double Bless-
ing; and this we shall do, by following the few
Rules already given; to which I refer you.

Then the Close of this Psalm will become our
true Character, and may it be our continuing
One. *Happy are the People that are in
such a case; yea, happy are the People whose
God is the Lord.*

FINIS.

